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### Oral History Interview: Nancy Hesson

Nancy Hesson

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# MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA

HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA 25701

## ORAL HISTORY

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Date 6/5/83

Mrs. Waldo Hesson (Nan)  
(Signature - Interviewee)

77 Sumner St.  
Address

Huntington, W. Va. 25701

Date 6/5/83

Nancy Hesson  
(Signature - Witness)  
John Hesson

ORAL HISTORY LOG

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Nancy Hesson

MSO#: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

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RELEASE FORM STATUS:

DATE OF INITIAL RELEASE FORM: 6-5-83

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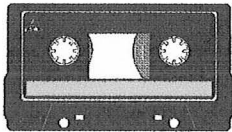
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NOTES ON FOLLOWUP (NOTE DATE & SPECIFY ACTIVITY):

6/15/99 - sent to Mrs. Hesson for review. (Waldo Hesson  
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6/24/99 - sent to library (1 tape) sent copy to  
Mrs. Hesson



**AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: NANCY HESSON**

**CONDUCTED BY: JOHN HESSON**

**DATE OF INTERVIEW: JUNE 5, 1983**

**TRANSCRIBED & TYPED BY: GINA KEHALI KATES**

*Corrected 6/23/99*

**JH: I, John Hesson, the interviewer, am interviewing Nancy Allen Hesson, at 77 Sycamore Street in Huntington, West Virginia, 25705. She's age 64. The date is July-, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1983.**

**JH: . . .The date is June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1983. Where were you born?**

**NH: A town up the Ohio River called Point Pleasant.**

**JH: Okay. Were you born in a hospital?**

**NH: No, in a home.**

**JH: By a doctor or midwife?**

**NH: Doctor.**

**JH: Do you remember his name?**

**NH: Uh-huh, Dr. Fagley. (Fadely)**

**JH: Fagley. How many grades did you finish?**

**NH: I finished through high school.**

**JH: How long were your school days?**

**NH: How long? What do you mean? In hours? (JH: Hours) Well, we went to school about the same hours you do. We went from eight to about three.**

**JH: Did you have to be vaccinated before entering school?**

**NH: Yes, we did.**

**JH: What was your first job?**

**NH: My very first job, I worked...the first job that I really got paid for, I worked, I had graduated from high school and went to business school. And I got a summer job**

working for a lawyer here in Huntington.

JH: You were about eighteen?

NH: Eighteen, uh-huh.

JH: Okay. What did you think of the policies of Franklin Roosevelt?

NH: Well, I was very fond of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. I was one of his backers. I

thought he was a very able man.

JH: Were there any particular favorite policies that you had, that you really liked out of all of them?

NH: Well, we had lived through The Depression, which was a terrible time for everyone. And he seemed to have the motivation and the will to want to help the common people. And he did it in various ways. And he brought us out of The Depression.

JH: Did you have a job during The Depression?

NH: Oh, it was just...hit and miss. I was in school at the time, during the worst part of it. But I had seen some really sad things. Where we were one of the fortunate families that had food to eat. We had children to faint in our classroom from lack of food.

JH: What did you do during the war?

NH: I stayed home during the war period. I had two small children, and I stayed at home.

JH: Okay. When did you move to Huntington from Point Pleasant?

NH: I was only ten years old, I think, the first time we came to Huntington. And I thought it was the most beautiful city I had ever seen.

JH: Did you live anywhere besides Huntington, after Point Pleasant?

NH: Oh, yes, we moved around quite a bit. My stepfather was a government boat inspector. And we moved in about a two to three year period. We lived in Kentucky, we lived in Ohio, we lived in Illinois, we lived in Indiana. We lived in Pennsylvania. But eventually we came back, and established a residence here.

JH: When did you first go to Charleston?

NH: I was only seven years old when we moved to Charleston. I was in the second grade.

**JH:** Okay. How has Huntington changed since you were a girl?

**NH:** Well, I've seen quite a few changes. The C & O shop used to be the biggest employer around here. They employed hundreds of men. And they had a huge office force, employed hundreds of people. And I saw it go downhill since that time. But I've seen other things expand. Like Marshall at that time was a very small teaching college. I saw it over the years expand. And they've all been so good to see this. And now it's a university. And it has so many potentials for everyone.

**JH:** Was there anything big that replaced C & O? As a big employer in Huntington? After it declined?

**NH:** No, outside of Marshall's growth, I've never...there hasn't been any industry that I've ever seen.

**JH:** Now, what other jobs did you have besides the one in the law office?

**NH:** Oh, I found a little bit of everything. After my children were grown, I worked for General Electric Small Appliances, doing demonstration work. I did that for about two years. I worked for a food brokerage. Different types of work like that. It was all very interesting. I usually just worked just three days a week. But it was interesting work, meeting people.

**JH:** Did you work any in the real estate business with your husband?

**NH:** I did, my husband established a real estate business in 1965. We opened our own office, and we worked it for ten years. I just helped in the office. He did the selling, and I did the bookkeeping and the typing, and just general work. And we worked well together. We enjoyed it.



JH: What did you husband do before getting into real estate?

NH: He was a city fireman...was for twenty years...in the city fire department here in Huntington.

JH: Were there any times there was a big fire and you kind of worried about whether he was going to come out okay?

NH: Yes, I did. One of the terrible fires was the state hospital, right here in Huntington. It caught fire. It was a terrible tragedy. Quite a few people lost their lives. We saw the whole block. He was on that fire downtown. The whole block of tenth street all the way up fourth avenue and out tenth street was destroyed by fire. It was a very terrible thing to see.

JH: Was he ever seriously injured?

NH: No, he was very fortunate. He wasn't injured in any of them.

JH: Where have you traveled since you've grown up?

NH: Well, now, my husband and I have been to Florida many a number of times. And of course, the beach areas, through Virginia and the Carolinas. And we had one very good experience. Our oldest...elder son was in the service. And he was stationed at Fort Ord in California. And we made the trip to pick him up. And we got to see California and got to see things that we never expected to see. We enjoyed it.

JH: Which son was that?

NH: That was our oldest son, Michael.

JH: Did you do anything after the real estate business?

NH: No, my husband became ill and we had to retire. He retired with his retirement.

Since that time, why, we've stayed close to home fairly well. [chuckles]

JH: Can you remember anything historic that you've seen in Huntington or the area around?

NH: Well...I can remember the first airplane I saw.

JH: Where was that?

NH: I had seen them in the sky, but to see them up close, I had never seen them. We had gone to Gallipolis [Ohio] had what they called an air show. There wasn't a lot of airplanes. But they were very flimsy looking at that time. Most of them were open. And I had an uncle that flew. But I was put up in the cockpit and shown how this works and that works and I've never forgotten that. That was a thrill.

JH: About how old were you?

NH: I was only about, I'd say, about seven.

JH: Can you remember your first car?

NH: Well, now cars were already fairly well established. But they were different. They were called Rios and Packards and Stutz. You don't hear of those now. But of course, the main car then was the Ford. Everybody had a Ford touring car, that could afford it.

JH: About how old were you when you got your first car?

NH: I was about eight, seven or eight years old. And it was a touring car. And uh, I can remember, you always had a repair kit. And it was on the running board of the car. That repair kit was right there, because cars broke down quite often. And the roads were terrible at that time. But I can remember that car, and I can remember that we had what they called an <sup>isingle</sup> [inaudible]...windows that were put up, that when the car was

opened, that when it stormed, you had to get out. If a storm came, you had to get out and put all these windows on the side of your car, so it wouldn't rain in on you.

JH: Well, what were you doing during the '20s? Just going to school, and....?

NH: Just going to school. I didn't start school, you see, until it must have been about 1926 I started to school.

JH: And you wouldn't have remembered anything about the stock market crash in 1929?

NH: No, I don't remember that. I remember The Depression, and everybody being in such hard straits. But I don't remember the Crash at all.

JH: Do you remember [inaudible].....when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

NH: Yes, I do. I remember that. It was on Sunday, and my husband was out washing his car, And ~~it~~ a flash came over the radio. And I ran out to tell him about it. And it startled and shocked everybody. And that night, we had already gone to bed, and we both popped out of the bed because we heard news boys out on the street, hollering about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. And we got up and went out and bought a paper. They put out a special edition.

JH: Do you remember anything about the bombing of Japan? Nuclear bombing?

NH: Not too much. It was just a horrible thing to happen. But it did end the war.

JH: You know anything about D Day or anything?

NH: Yes. We were out in the part of the park that's called the Lion's Den. Our families had all met out there. We were having a cookout. And we heard the bells start ringing and the whistles start blowing, and we knew that's what it was.

**JH:** Well, how did you know what it was, just because.....

**NH:** Everyone had been expecting it. We were expecting the end to it. And we heard the church bells all ringing in Huntington, and whistles blowing. We knew.

**JH:** Just where is the Lion's Den?

**NH:** In Ritter Park, off the...as you go up to what used to be the upper part of the park there, it cuts through Eighth Street. And they had outdoor ovens and things like that, cookout areas with tables. And we were all out there having a good time.

**JH:** Is it close to the Rose Garden?

**NH:** Up quite a bit from the Rose Garden.



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Date 6/5/83

Mrs. Waldo Hesson (Nancy)  
(Signature - Interviewee)

77 Sycamore St.  
Address

Huntington, W. Va. 25705

Date 6/5/83

Mike Hesson  
(Signature - Witness)

John Hesson



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Nancy Nelson

Signature

6-17-89

Date